

Prairie Notes

October 04, 2006

Subject: Tandy Hills Report

The following is a recent newsletter I publish for an group dedicated to protecting Tandy Hills Nature Area. I have been an advocate of the park for many years. Basically, our yard is an extension of the park.

Attention Grass Huggers, Prairie Lovers and Nature Mystics:

If you are concerned about and or interested in the future of Tandy Hills Nature Area, mark October 11, on you calendar. Director of the FW Nature Center, Suzanne Tuttle, will be meeting with District 8 Council Member, Kathleen Hicks, Friends of THNA and various parks department officials to tour the park and discuss the upcoming restoration plans. Bring sturdy shoes, water and questions for city officials. The tour will start at 4 PM at the playground on View Street.

THNA Field Report:

The rain we had a couple of weeks ago did wonders for **Tandy Hills Nature Area**. Combined with shorter days and cooler temps, the park is more alive than I've seen it in a long time.

Spring on the prairie is mostly wildflower time, but Fall is for grass lovers. Nearly all the grasses that are native to THNA are maturing rapidly in height and color, making up for lost time due to another dry summer.

Little Bluestem, Seep Muhly, Sideoats Gramma, Purple Spangletop, Blue Gramma, Inland Sea Oats, Buffalo Grass and some others I can't identify are all looking fine, especially when shot through with late afternoon sun rays. The towering king of the hill, Indian Grass, is still hiding.

But that's not all! Fall flowers and shrubs in a wide array of colors are coming on strong, some peaking right now. Here's a partial list, using common names, of what I have observed blooming right now: Heath Aster, Meadow Aster, Snow-On-The-Prairie, Wild Garlic, False Garlic, Gayfeather, False Gaura, Giant Blue Sage, Maximilian Sunflower, Eryngo, Plains Coreopsis and many others I haven't yet ID'd.

These flowers and grasses are well distributed throughout the park, intermingled with the fall colors of Red Sumac, Queen's Delight, Twistleaf Yucca, Oak and Little Elm trees and the ubiquitous seed heads of Purple Coneflower.

Animal Tales:

Surprisingly, there are still wild mammals to be found at THNA, despite the lack of a reliable water source. The usual raccoon, skunk, possum and the occasional coyote, to be sure, are present. This past spring I found myself within 10 feet of a mother fox and her young kit in the high grass west of Ben Street. We got a good, long look at each other before they decided to move on. This summer I had an encounter with an extra large bobcat that I will never forget. A neighbor claims to have witnessed a bobcat cub stalking a flock of wild turkey that were foraging on the grass seed heads just across the street from our house. We have other birds, too: Owls and hawks are common. Occasionally, I see raptors skimming the hills in late evening, which helps explain the armadillo carcasses I have found. We even had a roadrunner hunting lizards in our yard for a week or so.

What else? Butterflies of many types including, Monarchs, grasshoppers, tiny, snake like lizards, migratory fowl, this place is truly an engineering masterpiece. And only 5 minutes from downtown Cowtown.

This special time will not last long, so I encourage you to Get Out and spend some time here! It's good for what ails you. As always, wear sturdy shoes and bring water. Leave your electronic devices in the car.

Don Young
10/04/06

"Be as I am - a reluctant enthusiast...a part time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here."
-Edward Abbey

Friends of Tandy Hills Nature Area

P.O. Box 470041
Fort Worth, TX 76147
USA
817-731-2787

